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ON MISSION — Jim Burnett, pastor of Raymond Road Church, Jackson, leads children in a Bible study during Vacation Bible School this summer in Salisbury, Maryland. Raymond Road Church is in partnership with Harvest Church of Salisbury. (BR special photo)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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Miss. church catches partnership vision

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

Raymond Road Church, Jackson, has caught a vision of planting churches because of its involvement in partnership missions in Maryland, according to pastor Jim Burnett.

Burnett said soon after coming to Raymond Road in 1997, "The Lord put it in my heart that we needed to get outside of ourselves."

He said there was a gap between giving to missions and being involved in missions, and he wanted to find a way to close that gap.

Burnett called Paul Harrell, director of the Partnership Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

"Paul put me in touch with Mike Wilson and Jimmy Johnson of the Maryland/Delaware Baptist Convention," Burnett said.

They suggested Burnett get in touch with Mike Fortenberry, a church planter who was working on a new church start in Salisbury, Maryland.

"The moment I contacted Mike Fortenberry, it fell into place," Burnett said.

In March 1998, Fortenberry came to Raymond Road Church and signed a covenant of partnership.

"Each member of Raymond Road Church signed it," Burnett said, "indicating they would pray for and support the work of Harvest Church in Salisbury."

Raymond Road had just partnered with a church that did not yet exist, but in April 1998, Burnett went to Harvest Church for the launch of the new work.

"We didn't know where this thing was leading," he said. "Helping a brand new church get on its feet was a new adventure."

The church-to-church partnership began a full year before the formal state convention-to-state convention partnership was signed.

In the summer of 1998, a group of about 19 people, mostly youth, went to Salisbury and conducted a Vacation Bible School (VBS) that enrolled around 30 children. In the evenings they held revival services.

"I believe our ministry was an encouragement to them," Burnett said.

Then in July 1999 Raymond Road Church returned with a group of 22 people. They conducted another VBS that doubled the previous year's enrollment. In the evenings, Raymond Road Church members teamed up with the Harvest Church members and distributed 2,500 packets containing the Jesus Video.

In March 2000, Raymond Road Church is planning to send a revival team for a Sunday through Wednesday revival effort.

Also in 2000, Raymond Road Church is joining with three other Mississippi churches to start another church in the Frederick area of Maryland.

Burnett said he felt inspired by God to call fellow South Jackson pastors Rob Futral of Country Woods Church, and Don Gann of Wynndale Church, along with

Bendon Ginn, pastor of Eastside Church, Brookhaven, to ask if their churches would partner with Raymond Road Church in helping start the new church.

"God has been all over this thing," Burnett said.

Raymond Road Church voted in October to put \$30,000 over three years into the new church.

It takes two workers to start a new church, Burnett said. The goal is to have the two church planters — a pastor and a worship leader — in place at the new church by January 2000, and to begin the new work by the fall.

"They expect 200-300 people for the first service," he said.

Involvement in partnership missions has had several positive effects on the South Jackson congregation, Burnett said.

"First, it has set our mission program on fire," he said. One of the reasons is because missions now has a name and face for Raymond Road Church members.

"Second," Burnett said, "we have learned that faith grows a church. Faith in God means we go where he is going, not where we can afford to go."

When Burnett came to Raymond Road Church, some people questioned whether the church had much of a future. Now the church is considering a new children's wing in order to meet the demand.

"I would say to other pastors, 'It is not about your size, but about your availability.' We are not a big church. We have felt God's leadership in this partnership and church planting.

"Our membership has caught a vision of church planting. This won't be our last church plant," Burnett said.

"Some people think this is a way to lose money and people," he said. "No, this is a way to grow. We are a church on the move, and others want to be a part of that."

For more information about partnership missions, contact the MBCB Partnership Missions Department at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 292-3398, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. E-mail: pharrell@mbcb.org.

Miss. CP receipts fall

Mississippi Cooperative Program receipts for the month of October 1999 fell below giving in October of last year, but are still ahead of budget for the year.

Mississippi Baptists gave a total of \$2,071,428 through the Cooperative Program in October, according to Jim Futral, executive director/treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The amount is down 1.3% from October 1998 giving, which totalled \$2,097,741.

Total giving for the first 10 months of 1999 is \$21,024,784, or 4.66%, more than that given in the first 10 months of 1998. October giving this year was \$219,000 less than October giving last year.

The record giving month for the Cooperative Program in Mississippi is \$22,422,615 given in November 1997.

The October giving from the Cooperative Program in Mississippi is \$1,171,000 less than the same month last year. Small amounts were given in October 1998 and the special Military Outreach, Nov. 1-10, at Camp Garay.

SBC CP totals down

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Totals for the first month of the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget year were down compared to the same period last year although above the monthly budget requirement, reported Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

For October 1999, SBC CP receipts totaled \$14,083,800, compared to October 1998 of \$15,526,056, a decrease of 14.4%. September was 53% above the monthly budget requirement.

The SBC finished its 1998-99 fiscal year at the end of September with a sixth consecutive year of record Cooperative Program giving.

In designated gifts for the month of October, giving was received compared to October 1998 of \$2,389,724, or 13.89%.

For the first month of the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget year, SBC CP receipts were \$12,290,000, which was 32% above the monthly budget requirement. For the month of September, SBC CP receipts were \$14,083,800, or 53% above the monthly budget requirement.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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It's wake-up time in Mississippi

A few weeks ago, the South Carolina Supreme Court issued a ruling that apparently signals the beginning of the end for legalized video poker gambling in that state. The state's pro-gambling governor has suddenly decided to offer an olive branch to gambling opponents, calling for everyone to work together.

In case you missed it, that's a complete reversal of his election-year rhetoric.

In an October election in neighboring Alabama, voters handily defeated a proposal crafted by the state's most powerful politicians that would have created a statewide lottery. Governor Don Siegelman, a devout pro-gambler who demonized his Baptist opponents and other religious people in the campaign leading up to the lottery vote, has now invited those same anti-gambling organizations inside his political tent.

These major defeats for pro-gambling forces follow on the heels of similar voter action in other states in recent years, such as the doomed efforts to enact lotteries and allow casinos in states such as Arkansas and Florida.

While gambling in some form remains legal in nearly every state in the nation, it does appear that the yellow-brick road promised by the gambling/political complex has of late developed a few potholes.

Courtesy of the electorate and, in some cases, right-thinking judges, gamblers are finding it harder and harder to expand their evil empire into untainted areas. It certainly seems as if the American people are beginning to develop a case of indigestion over all the blue sky promises they were asked to swallow.

Could it be that the faint rumblings of voter dissatisfaction are beginning to be heard in Mississippi?

Don't get your hopes up too high. Gamblers are still holding tightly to their goal of running the state Las Vegas-style, but people are beginning to talk.

They're beginning to talk about the effect legalized gambling is having on the quality of life in Mississippi. They're beginning to talk about the tragedy of families getting sucked into the black hole that is legalized gambling in Mississippi.

They're beginning to talk about children with nowhere to live, and children locked inside dangerously hot cars while their parents gamble in air-conditioned luxury.

They're beginning to talk about good employees gone bad, embezzling money to gamble and then doing whatever it takes to cover up their misdeeds.

They're beginning to talk about the lack of educational and civic improvements that the pro-gamblers promised would surely follow legalization. They're beginning to talk about the disintegration of neighborhoods when casinos move in.

They're beginning to talk about the increased alcoholism, domestic abuse, and suicide rates that all go hand-in-hand with legalized gambling.

They're beginning to talk about the unimaginable amounts of money pouring into politician's coffers from gamblers with vested interests in the outcome of the state's elections.

They're beginning to talk about politicians who take gambler's money.

"**ALL RIGHT— ALL TOGETHER NOW — 'I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH COMPLEX, INVESTMENT STRATEGIES!'**"



A lot of folks in Mississippi are beginning to wonder if gambling is worth the cost, and all the slick television commercials in the world won't remove the stench from legalized gambling once it reaches the nostrils of Mississippians.

It is a corrupting, corrosive force, and our day of reckoning was put into motion when we legalized — and therefore legitimized — gambling in our state.

Our neighbors are apparently waking up to that fact, and not surprisingly their politicians are waking up to the fact that the citizens are waking up.

Can it happen in Mississippi? Get involved and you'll see that all things are possible to a people of faith (Phil. 4:13).

It's time to wake up and get started.

GUEST OPINION: *Standing on a powerful crutch*

By Billie Buckley, member
First Church, Mt. Olive

Dear Governor Ventura: As part of organized religion, which is to you a sham and a crutch, I write this letter. Others have asked you to apologize; instead, I would like to say, "I am sorry."

I am sorry that no one has ever told you truthfully about the reality of the Christian religion based on a relationship with its central figure, Jesus Christ.

I am sorry that no one has ever lived before you a life of faith in him to show you the true God of my faith.

You and I do have one thing in common. No, I have never had my face on the front of Newsweek Magazine as a politician. I have never been interviewed by Playboy Magazine.

Yet, in 1979 I wrote a prayer in front of my Bible: "Lord, make me real and not religious."

I really don't know you, but you seem to put a lot of stock in being real. May I share with you the reality of the Christian religion, as I understand it?

Am I right to think you share with many others the following objections to Christianity? The first objection being, "The church is filled with hypocrites. It is a sham."

Well, I have to agree with you. There are hypocrites in the church that I have loved for over 60 years. On the other hand, there are people of integrity in my church — people who value what God values and not what the world says is valuable.

That is not the real issue. I am not asked to follow Christ's followers but to follow him. Was he a hypocrite? If he was, then my faith is a sham. All Scripture tells me that he was perfect and without sin.

Being a sinner does not make me a hypocrite, for this is the first step in becoming a Christian. I must recognize that my sins separate me from God. You might want to know this: Jesus denounced hypocrites, even as you do.

Your second objection to organized religion was that it is just a crutch for weak people. Karl Marx agreed with you. He said, "Religion is the opiate of the masses."

Strange as it may seem, most folks do need a crutch at some point in their life. Could it be that your "in-your-face" personality is a crutch?

Surely, the real you needs quiet time away from the noise and confusion of the sensationalism in the political arena, a time when you don't have to know the answer to every question no matter how shallow or how deep.

I think I know why you are confused about this.

You may think Christianity is designed for weak people who

need an emotional crutch or a blanket of protection. Your strong personality does not recognize this need.

May I share with you that my faith in Christ has made me strong as I depend on him?

Now, this is not a passive, fold-your-hands, sit in the corner dependence. I would never have survived 32-years in a classroom as a teacher if this were so.

My faith and the Christian faith centers around these words of Jesus:

"I am the Way (if you get lost, Billie and Jesse) I am the Truth (even if you are sincerely wrong it doesn't count, Billie and Jesse). No man cometh unto the Father except by me."

As a nine-year-old girl in Laurel, I heard these words and somehow knew I needed a Heavenly Father.

My earthly father was killed in a foxhole in Germany during World War II. I have learned from his letters and life (as told to me by others) that his faith was not a sham or a crutch.

What a waste his life would have been if that had been the case. My hope is that your life will not be wasted either.

Gang ministry changing lives in Honduras

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (BP) — His head was splitting. Just moving was painful. Armando Meza crept slowly from his bed and turned on the radio to get some music to soothe his aching head.

The music didn't help.

"I knelt and asked the Lord to pardon me, that I had failed to stop drinking before because I was a sick alcoholic. But I asked him to please help me," Meza recalled.

"I turned on the television and found the answer I was seeking," he said. A former alcoholic, now a pastor in Costa Rica, was giving his testimony on a broadcast of the "700 Club."

At the end of the program, Meza prayed: "Lord, if you could change that man, I want to be like him. Lord, help me. I want to be like him, I want to be a pastor."

Little did he know that not only would he become a pastor, but God eventually would team him with a Southern Baptist missionary to transform youth gangs and neighborhoods in Honduras' capital city.

Ten years later, Meza became pastor of Cerro Grande Church, a congregation in Tegucigalpa that missionaries Tim and Dorcas Patterson had helped start.

The Pattersons learned Meza had a burden for the youth of the Cerro Grande neighborhood. Even before he was pastor, he had tried to evangelize the youth of the area, many of whom were gang members. Nothing proved very successful.

After a heart attack in 1997, Meza was praying about how to reach the youth. He felt led to approach the coach of a soccer team in the area.

The coach told the pastor he needed help getting uniforms for the team. Meza promised to help and began accompanying the team to their games. The boys, already involved in crime, were leery of the pastor at first. But gradually, they



OFF TO THE GAME — Southern Baptist missionary Tim Patterson (left) gives members of the Maranatha Football Club in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, a send-off to another game. Patterson helped Honduran pastor Armando Meza launch a ministry among gang members that has multiplied to 30 groups with 1,100 youth in 15 neighborhoods of the city. (BP photo by Betty Poor)

began to warm up to him.

"At the beginning, it wasn't the proper time to talk to them about Christ. But I was praying that God would be preparing their hearts," Meza said.

Finally he was able to get the boys to come to the church once a week for Bible study. As time went by, the boys began to accept Christ. But they didn't integrate well into the church.

Patterson gave Meza an idea that cracked the gang ministry wide open.

"I shared with him some things that I had learned about church-planting movements," Patterson said. "I introduced the concept of autonomous reproducing house churches with home-grown leadership.

"We discussed the idea of evangelizing a natural grouping of people and to allow that to become their church. We discussed the possibilities of raising leaders from the new converts and allowing each natural social grouping [gang] to become a church in itself.

"Armed with this new concept, Meza had no barriers to deal with such as buildings, established church programs, and protocol," Patterson said. "This would be a missionary movement that would help wherever it could."

The new approach worked, and God began moving so dramatically among the gang members that a profound change was being made in the Cerro Grande neighborhood.

Meza's work among the gangs was making such a difference, in fact, that it attracted the attention of a local television station, which aired a pro-

gram on the outreach. The publicity generated invitations to start groups in other parts of the capital city.

Now, less than five years later, the gang outreach has multiplied to 30 groups with 1,100 youth in 15 neighborhoods of the city. Meza also works with 800 other young people in city schools with a "True Love Waits" program promoting sexual abstinence until marriage.

Editor's note: Armando Meza will speak in Jackson on Nov. 12 at a partnership missions celebration. For more information on the event, please turn to page ten.

Looking back

10 years ago

William Carey College's board of trustees elects James W. Edwards, 51, as president. Edwards has been serving as interim president since June 1989, when J. Ralph Noonkester retired after 33 years of leading the Hattiesburg-based, Baptist-affiliated college.

20 years ago

The 1,228 registered messengers to the 144th annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention re-elect Jackson pastor Bill Causey as president; call for an in-depth study of "all possible alternatives concerning the future of Clarke College;" and approve a \$11.2 million budget.

50 years ago

The Miss. Department of Archives and History presents to Mississippi College (MC) president D. M. Nelson the 1833 degree medallion awarded to Mary M. Mills, providing documentary proof that MC was the first college in the U.S. to grant degrees to women.



MISSISSIPPI
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THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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M-Fuge going international

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — High school students wanting a taste of international missions can travel to one of two countries next summer and join a new missions initiative sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and the International Mission Board (IMB).

"In the summer of 2000, LifeWay and the IMB will offer an opportunity for youth to have a life-changing experience as they minister alongside IMB missionaries in Valencia, Venezuela, and London, England," Mark Robbins, international consultant for the Centrifuge/Crosspoint section of LifeWay, said.

The missions initiative, M-Fuge International, combines the elements of Centrifuge with an opportunity to be involved in personal ministry in an international setting, said Robbins, an IMB missionary in Quito, Ecuador, for 17 years before joining LifeWay.

"What we are doing is partnering with these youth to help our international missionaries accomplish their goals and strategies in starting church-planting movements. These students will be allowed to go and participate, help with, and encourage the work our missionaries are doing."

"Today's youth are different. Learning about missions through literature used to be OK, but today they want hands-on experience."

For more information, call 1-877-CAMP123 (226-7123) or e-mail fuge@lifeway.com.

SBC Annuity Board approves 2000 budget

DALLAS (BP) — Trustees of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) adopted the operating budget for 2000 and approved plans to expand products and services in the 21st

century, including an option for personal investments for ministers and denominational employees.

Meeting in Dallas Nov. 1-2 for their regular fall session, trustees received reports from President O. S. Hawkins, Chief Operating Officer John R. Jones, Treasurer Jeffrey P. Billinger, the executive officer for systems and technology services, Richard M. Hart Jr., and each of the standing committees of the Board.

Hawkins praised the efforts of the staff for a unified effort in adding more individuals and churches to the retirement plans than ever before for the first nine months of a year. He also cited the team effort involved in helping to prepare the Board for its work into the 21st century.

Trustees unanimously approved a resolution to expand the Annuity Board's mission statement and add three ministry assignments. The proposed expansions include making available personal investments for ministers and denominational employees and their spouses, working cooperatively with Baptist foundations to make available institutional investments for SBC churches and entities, and making available employee benefit services and institutional investments to like-minded organizations.

The trustee insurance committee, chaired by George Tous van Nijkerk, reported on comprehensive medical plan enhancements to take effect Jan. 1, 2000. The million-dollar lifetime maximum on claims will be removed and selected wellness benefits will be added. Additionally, the committee announced that Jan. 1, 2000, the North American Mission Board will begin participating in the Board's insurance programs.

Richard M. Hart Jr., provided an update for trustees con-

cerning the Board's preparations for Year 2000. Hart indicated all internal systems and equipment are prepared to process into the 21st century.

Timothy E. Head, chairman of the Board, presided as trustees approved a 2000 budget of \$45.5 million, a 2.58% increase over 1999. The Annuity Board receives no Cooperative Program funds for operations, but pays all expenses from an advisory fee on each of the 13 investment funds available to participants in the various retirement plans offered by the Board.

Operating expense for the insurance program is paid from rates charged to participants. The relief ministry administration expense is funded by the Retired Ministers' Support Fund of the Board. All Cooperative Program money received by the Board is paid as relief grants to needy retired ministers or denominational workers or their widows.

The administrative policy committee reported there would be no increase in benefits in the next year for annuitants receiving fixed benefits.

Upon recommendation of the administrative policy committee, trustees approved steps to implement the Ministers' Annuity Plan, a retirement plan for eligible self-employed ministers and chaplains within the Southern Baptist Convention. This plan will be made available to participants early in 2000.

The third quarter report of the president included statistical evidence that enrollments of church and institutional retirement plan participants remain strong, as do contributions to retirement accounts.

The relief committee of trustees approved 32 two-year monthly grants, nine two-year expense grants, one one-year monthly grant, one one-time grant, and declined six for being outside guidelines. Maximum supplemental assistance grants are \$200 per month for single persons and \$260 for couples. Twenty-three were added to the Adopt An Annuitant roll during the third quarter, and they receive an extra \$75 each month.

Other actions by the relief committee included approving a \$200 Christmas check for each relief recipient on the roll December 1.

The next scheduled meeting of Annuity Board trustees is Feb. 28-29, 2000, in Dallas.

MBCB officers elected

MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS



New officers of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), elected during the board's October 27 organizational meeting immediately following the 1999 Mississippi Baptist Convention, are (from left) Gary Richardson, pastor of First Church, West Point, vice-president; Jerry Mixon, pastor, Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, president; and Bob Simmons, member, Poplar Springs Drive Church, Meridian, secretary. The trio will serve on the MBCB executive committee by virtue of their offices. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Jerry Mixon, pastor
Rocky Creek Church,
Lucedale

VICE-PRESIDENT

Gary Richardson, pastor
First Church, West Point

SECRETARY

Bob Simmons, member
Poplar Springs Drive
Church, Meridian

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Gary Bunch, pastor
Woodville Church, Woodville

Kent Cochran, pastor
Pleasant Grove Church,
Brookhaven

A.J. Comfort Jr., member
First Church, Brandon

Sue Dockery, member
Broadmoor Church, Jackson

Jerry Estes, pastor
Dorsey Church, Shannon

Frank Harmon, pastor
First Church, Newton

Jerry Lundy, pastor
Harmony Church, Louisville

Dan Robertson, pastor
First Church, Natchez

Dell Scoper, member
First Church, Laurel

Johnny Walker, pastor
First Church, Winona

Jerry Watts, pastor
Bay Vista Church, Biloxi

Diane White, member
Midway Church, Meridian

Kiely Young, member
First Church, Gulfport

SHRINKING WORKFORCE

The unemployment figures for America released the first week in November reveal that the unemployment rate across our nation stands at just over four percent — a 29-year low.

When the government announced these figures, it was also mentioned that the consequences of such a small, available employee pool means that as people do their holiday shopping, the lines will be long and the service will be poor as you buy your Christmas presents.

While certainly we can be thankful for virtually full employment to be enjoyed by American citizens, few people bother to ask or think about why we do not have a growing number in the labor force.

It is not difficult to see part of the problem, if not the major part of the dilemma, which is related to fewer people being



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

born in our country. The reason why there are fewer is in large portion directly related to the Supreme Court decision, Roe v. Wade, which legalized abortion in the U.S.

Since that incredible landmark decision was made, over 30 million babies have been destroyed. What an incredible workforce we are missing. These are the unseen clerks, the missing teachers, the absent scientists, and the shortage of taxpayers.

Frequently I will see an article or hear someone discussing

the dilemma we are facing with an increased number of people who will be going on Social Security, the "baby boomer" generation reaching retirement age, coupled with a shrinking support base.

It does not take a world-class economist to figure out the problem, but few want to acknowledge that a moral issue is the basis of our growing dilemma. Ultimately, a disregard for human life and disrespect for the principles of God's Word will lead to our own downfall.

Strange, isn't it, that it only comes to our attention when we see it as long lines waiting to pay for a Christmas gift, or when we think about the squeeze that may come to a retirement check. What else are we missing?

Only God knows how many inventions will go undiscovered; how many songs will be unsung; how many sermons unpreached; how many lessons untaught; and how many blessings unknown.

Soon the Christmas classic, "It's a Wonderful Life" will again be broadcast. In the movie, a man and his world get to see what life would be like if he had not lived! His absence created a different world! Our abortion-distorted world will be very different, too! Oh, that our nation would again listen to the Lord, celebrate the miracle of new life, and enjoy the blessings that accompany growing children!

New book offers Jesus Seminar challenge

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — A seminary professor's new volume on the composition and the origins of New Testament documents challenges liberal theologians' theories of who wrote the books and when.

Arguing for a "corporate authorship," the use of common traditions, and the presence of a common "opposition mission," E. Earle Ellis, author of "The Making of the New Testament Documents," concludes that the New Testament was composed by four apostolic missions and, for the most part, between AD 50 and 70.

Ellis, research professor of theology emeritus and 'scholar in residence' at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, reaches historical conclusions in sharp contrast to those of the "Jesus Seminar," which supposes that the gospels were written long after AD 70 by unknown authors.

Ellis' work is an important resource in answering the theories of the Jesus Seminar and a similar group focusing on Paul, said Southwestern professor John Newport.

Ellis, whose 540-page book is the result of 25 years of study, said his conclusions about dates and authorships derive from his analysis of specific units in the New Testament, such as confessions, expositions, hymns, and episodes of Jesus' sayings and work.

"The Making of the New Testament Documents," he said, attempts to identify and to trace the origin and usage of these preformed pieces.

Ellis concludes that the New Testament is the product of four cooperating apostolic missions, whose leaders can be identified in Galatians 2. One mission was headed by James, the brother of Jesus, and located in Jerusalem. The apostle John's ministry was based in Palestine until the Jewish War and from that point on in Ephesus.

Peter's mission began in Jerusalem, but Ellis believes that the apostle transferred it to Caesarea following the events of Acts 12. Paul's ministry ranged across the breadth of the Mediterranean world, starting in Antioch, but moving on to Ephesus and later to Rome and Spain.

An example of the cooperation among these missions can be seen in the hymn that is featured in Philippians 2, Ellis said. He believes the Semitic idiom and style of the hymn indicate that it was composed in one of the Palestinian-based missions and was later used by Paul when he wrote his letter.

This cooperation and the use of one apost-

le's teaching pieces by others has implications for issues of authorship and for the dating of the New Testament, said Ellis.

The author of each document worked with others, he said, such as a secretary who wrote the letter and coworkers who wrote some of the pieces that were employed in the composition.

This "corporate authorship" of letters that went out under the author's 'imprimatur,' Ellis added, leads to the conclusion that one cannot determine the authorship of a gospel or an epistle by internal literary criteria.

"If one recognizes that authorship was a corporate enterprise, involving a number of helpers, ... one cannot assume a different authorship from differences of theme, style, or vocabulary," he said.

Each of the four missions produced a gospel, Ellis said, and shared the pre-formed episodes with each other, and this

held true also for the epistles.

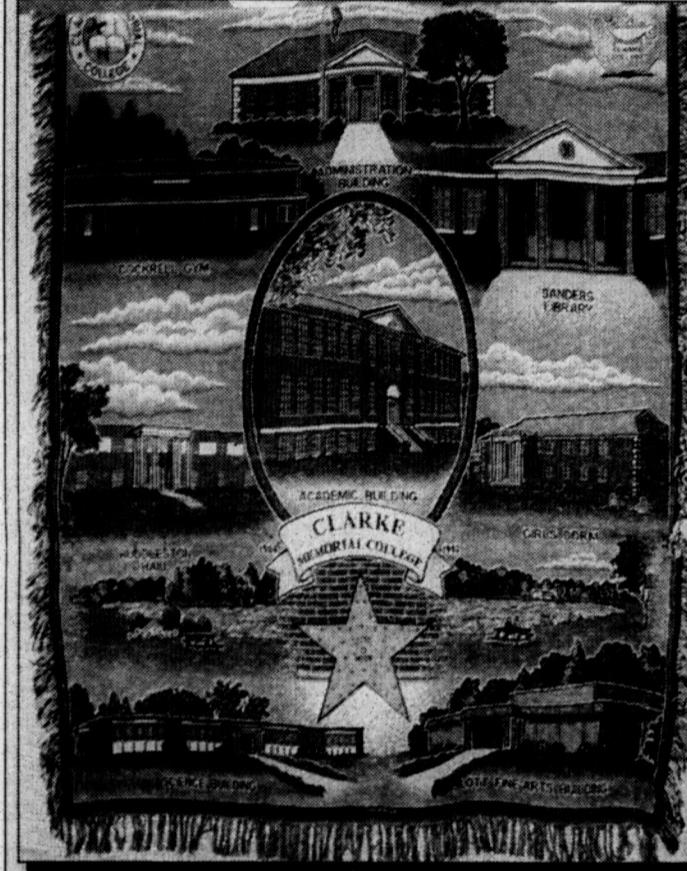
With the exception of the Johannine Gospel and letters, said Ellis, the works of the New Testament reflect a number of the same theological and ethical issues and problems, and they face the same "opposition mission," in this case, the gnosticizing Judaizers. These issues stand in contrast to those in the church at the end of the first century.

Ellis said that such characteristics have led him to conclude that the bulk of the New Testament, including Revelation, was composed between AD 50 and 70.

John's Gospel and letters, on the other hand, reflect a conflict with Docetics, and Ellis places them between AD 75 and 100.

"The Making of the New Testament Documents" is part of the Biblical Interpretation Series published by Brill Academic Publishers.

Clarke alumni offer Afghan memento



The Clarke Memorial College Alumni organization has commissioned an Afghan to commemorate the Baptist affiliated junior college which closed in 1992, according to Marian Thornton, former music instructor and alumni director at the Newton based school.

The Afghan measures 50" by 65" and is jacquard woven in 100% cotton. It features landmarks of the Clarke Memorial College such as the academic building, the Lottie Moon star, and the Sanders Library. It is offered for \$50.00 and can be ordered from the Clarke Memorial College Alumni Association.

The campus was sold in 1997 to the state Department of Mental Health and is in the process of being converted into a residential facility for adults. As part of the disposal of the property, one acre and a building was set aside and deeded to Clarke alumnus as a permanent memorial.

Thornton said when they realized that some of the buildings were scheduled to be torn down, pictures were taken and sent to Riddle & Cockrell, Inc. who made the Afghan.

Thornton says the Afghan is sure to become a treasured heirloom to former faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of Clarke.

For more information or to place an order write Clarke Memorial College Alumni, P. O. Box 493, Newton, MS 39435. Telephone (601) 774-5274 or (601) 683-9970.

Hattiesburg woman on Bible memorization quest

By Tim Nicholas, director
MBCB Office of Communication

No one read Scripture to begin session of the 1999 Mississippi Baptist Convention annual meeting Oct. 26-27 at First Church, Jackson.

Instead, for all four sessions of the convention, Janet Pope, a member of Temple Church, Hattiesburg, quoted Scripture from memory.

She quoted John 1:1-18; Hebrews 11:1-40; 1 Peter 1:1-25; and Philippians 4:1-23. That's a total of 106 verses.

Pope works with her husband, Ethan, with Foundations for Living. He leads seminars in personal financial management; she leads conferences and women's retreats.

In eight years of memorizing, Pope is working on her 11th Bible Book — Revelation. She said she's giving herself

two-and-a-half years to complete that book.

Pope said she probably has five of the Books in long-term memory, needing to review the others. "I don't have photographic memory," she said.

"I say the verses out loud while getting dressed, driving the kids to school, vacuuming, a little bit here and there," she said.

She was inspired in 1992 by a woman who recited the Book of Colossians.

"I was convicted by the shallowness of my own Bible knowledge," she said.

"My goal of memorizing is not for knowledge, but to know God and walk closer to him," said Pope.

If a person wants to begin Scripture memorization, Pope said to start small. "I rec-

ommend Psalm 1. There you see what God is asking of us."

Pope's pastor Dean Register said, "It's (Scripture) not just up here," pointing to his head, "it's a lifestyle. She speaks it so conversationally."

Pope said God has opened doors for her, particularly with the women's retreats and other venues.

During the retreats, she explains what she believes are God's four purposes for giving the Bible: "for intimacy with God, for transformation into his likeness, to make us usable for his kingdom, and to spare us from devastating consequences."

Janet Pope said her constant prayer is "God, please help me live this."

The Popes can be reached at Foundations for Living, P.O. Box 15356, Hattiesburg, MS 39404. Telephone: (601) 582-2000.



Pope

JUST FOR THE RECORD



New Home Church, Scott Association, recently celebrated its first homecoming with special services and dinner on the grounds. Attending the homecoming were (from left) Tom Lester, star of the "Green Acres" television series, who spoke at the afternoon service; William H. Perkins Jr., editor of The Baptist Record, who spoke at the morning service; Billy Ray Smith, pastor; and homecoming planning committee members James Ford and Haskell Stringer.

Poplar Springs Church, Newton, celebrated its 150th anniversary on Oct. 10 with 197 people registered in attendance. Charles Bonner, pastor, presented a certificate and plaque on behalf of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission to Dan Edwards, planning chairman for the anniversary celebration. James Spencer of Hernando Church brought the message "Giving God the Glory." Pictured (from left) are Bonner, (1996-present); Bryce Evans, pastor (1962-1967); Spencer, pastor (1970-1975); Mike Everett, director of missions (Newton-Scott Associations); John Boggan, pastor (1992-1996); David Rives, pastor (1984-1987); and Edwards, deacon.



Poplar Springs Church, Newton

Fasting and Prayer '99 will be held at First Church, Brandon, Nov. 11-13. The times are Thursday, 6-9 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m.-12 noon. Gene Henderson is pastor. For more information, call (601) 825-6766.

MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

HILLCREST BAPTIST CHURCH in Jackson is seeking nursery workers for Sunday and Wednesday night services. Pay is negotiable. For more information call the church at 601-372-0132.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, FLORA is currently seeking a minister of music/education. Seminary degree is preferred. Send resume along with photo to: FBC Flora, P.O. Box 163, Flora, MS 39071. Call 601-879-8022 for more information.

First Church, Sumrall, will have dedication services for its new worship center on Nov. 21. The speaker for the 10 a.m. service will be Sonny Adkins, director of evangelism, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. There will also be a service at 1:30 p.m. with musical guests Heaven's Jubilee and a time of recognizing former pastors and staff members. Glenn Davis is pastor.

For the Sake of Zion Bible Conference will be held at Harmony Church, Crystal Springs, Nov. 11. Pastor's conference will start 1:30 p.m. and general public, at 7 p.m. Conferences will feature presentations by two orthodox Jewish citizens of Israel. Clark Stewart is pastor. For more information, call the church at (601) 892-1121.

Gunter Road Church, Florence, will celebrate the 30th anniversary of The Gospel Messengers, 6:30 p.m., on Nov. 13. Also featured will be New Life Quartet, Purvis; Christopher

Bryant, Florence; Becky Haley, Brookhaven; and Brenda Cook, pianist. Gene Jordan, pastor, will be the master of ceremony.

THAT WHOSEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM
SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVER-
LASTING LIFE. JOHN 3:16



The Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of First Church, Clara, sponsored a Missions Carnival in September to highlight the work of the WMU. The event included displays and demonstrations. This time of learning and fellowship provided an opportunity for parents to meet their children's teachers and for the church membership to learn more about WMU. Mission Friends, GAs, and Acteens are pictured with their leaders, Kim Purvis, Stacy Davis, Lorie Mills, Donna Walker, Phyllis Sumrall, and Renee Mills. Vivian Taylor is WMU director and the pastor is Mitchell Smith.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

The acclaimed one-man play "An Evening with Abraham Lincoln" will be performed at Mississippi College on Nov. 22 at 7 p.m. in Swor Auditorium of Nelson Hall. The play, performed by author and media personality Gene Griessman, combines Lincoln's wisdom and humor with flashbacks to Gettysburg and Ford's Theatre.

"**A Passion for His Word**" is the new art exhibit opening with a reception Nov. 11, 5-7 p.m. Sharon Howard, Laurel artist, will give a gallery talk about her work at 5:45 p.m. The Lucile Parker Gallery is located in the Thomas Fine Arts Building on the William Carey College campus in Hattiesburg. This exhibit, which will hang through Dec. 17, can be viewed during the regular gallery hours, 1-4 p.m., Monday-Friday or by appointment, call (601) 582-6192.

The Mississippi College Forensics team competed in the "Bicker Debates" on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Monroe on Oct. 15-17. Sonya Dickens, Seminary, and Brett Harvey, Byram, won the parliamentary Debate tournament. Other participants on the team

were Natalie Hartley, Jackson, and Gabe Coker, Magee. Overall, the team finished fifth in the Individual Events Sweepstakes.

The Freshman Class of Blue Mountain College invites senior, junior, and sophomore girls to High School Weekend on Nov. 19-20. Students will register on Friday afternoon and meet their hostesses for the weekend. Other activities on Friday include afternoon tea at Armstrong and attendance at the fall production,

"The Odd Couple." On Saturday morning students can meet with professors from the various classes and with staff members. After lunch the weekend culminates with a basketball game between the Blue Mountain College Topper Basketball team and William Carey College. Local students may register on Saturday morning and attend the play on Saturday. Reservations can be made by calling Blue Mountain College at 1-800-235-0136 by Nov. 12.

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YOUTH GROUPS NEEDED: pre-packaged (most meals, lodging, assignment) mission trips in 11 US cities and Toronto. NAMB endorsed. For more info, call Youth on Mission, 1-800-299-0385; www.yom.org.

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FULL-TIME MINISTER OF CHILDREN/YOUTH opportunity with Poplar Corner Baptist Church in Brownsville, TN. If interested, please fax inquiries to 901-771-7055 or P.O. Box 376, Brownsville, TN 38012.

INTERSTATE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is reopening its request for resumes for the position of executive director. Mail resumes to: Attention Search Committee, Interstate Baptist Association, P.O. Box 19960, Portland, Oregon, 97280-0960.

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What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

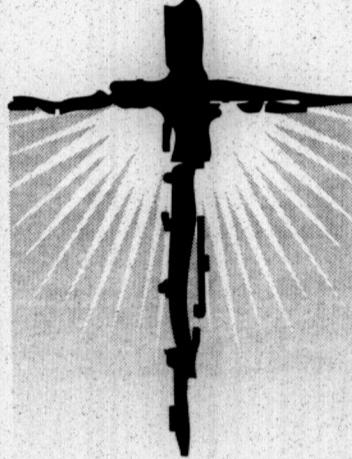
November 11, 1999

HouseTops is a **Baptist Record** supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's **Office of Communication**.

LIFT HIGH THE CROSS



Junior Hill



Ken Smith

MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

State Evangelism Conference

January 21-22, 2000

Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Madison
Mississippi Coliseum, Jackson



Steve & Becky Carver



Greg O'Neal



P.J. Scott



Phil Roberts



Jerry Pipes



Bill Britton



Ken Weathersby

"GOD FOR US"

JANUARY 22, 2000
2 P.M.

MISSISSIPPI COLISEUM

DIRECTED BY



Graham Smith

Sponsored by

Evangelism Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, S.A. Adkins, director

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Friday - January 21, 1:30 p.m.

Welcome Prayer	Phil Walker
Pastor, Ridgecrest Baptist Church	
Worship Leaders ..	Steve and Becky Carver
Message	Jerry Pipes
Praise/Worship	Steve and Becky Carver
Message	Phil Roberts
Praise/Worship	Steve and Becky Carver
Message	Junior Hill

Friday - 6:30 p.m.

Welcome/Prayer	Ed J. Deuschle
Consultant, Evangelism Department	
Worship Leader.....	Greg O'Neal
Message	Ken Weathersby
Worship/Praise.....	Greg O'Neal
Message	Ken Smith

Saturday - January 22, 9:00 a.m.

Welcome/Prayer ...	Don Lum, Consultant
Evangelism Department	
Worship Leader	Bill Britton
Message	P.J. Scott
Praise/Worship	Bill Britton
Message	Ken Smith
Praise/Worship	Bill Britton
Message	Junior Hill
Call to The Cross	

Saturday - 2:00 p.m.

"God For Us"	Mississippi Coliseum
Graham Smith	
Director, Music Department	

For more info, call 601-968-3800

or 1-800-748-1651

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**January 22
(Saturday)**

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GA/Acteens Campus Days



William Carey College
January 15
2-7 p.m.

- Missionaries • Basketball
- Music • Testimonies
- Cheerleaders

2:00 Registration and campus tours
3:00 Program
4:15 Snack, break, etc.
5:00 Game time



William Carey GA/Acteens Campus Day Registration (Deadline January 10)

Church _____ Assoc. _____
Contact person _____
Daytime phone _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
No. people _____ x \$7.50 = \$ _____

Make check to MBCB and send to GA/Acteens Campus Days,
WMU Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530

For more info call the State WMU Office
1-800-748-1651 (in state) or 601-292-3316

\$7.50 (includes basketball game, meal, program, and limited insurance)



MissionsQuest Weekend

MissionQuest from the inside out
Camp Garaywa

November 19-20
Friday 5:30 p.m. - Saturday 2 p.m.

\$27.50 per person
(includes meals, lodging, limited insurance, program fees)

**All Acteens and their
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- Hear D.P. Smith, missionary to West Africa
- Hear Acteens working on MissionsQuest
 - Activities for all age levels
 - Learn how you can participate

This is a great opportunity to learn about MissionsQuest, what it is, how to get started and work on MissionsQuest activities. Registration begins at 5:30. Dinner begins at 6:30. The weekend ends at 2 p.m. on Saturday.

MissionsQuest Weekend Registration Form Hurry! Reservations must be made immediately!!!

Church _____
Association _____
Contact person _____
Daytime Phone _____
Address _____
City _____ Zip _____
Number of people _____ x \$27.50 per person = \$ _____

Make checks payable to:
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB)
Send to: MissionsQuest Weekend, WMU Office, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530

For more info, call the State WMU Office at
1-800-748-1651 (in state) or 1-601-292-3316

Pray this day for...

November 12-25, 1999

Prayer Ministry Office • P.O. Box 530 • Jackson, MS 39205-0530 • Phone 968-3800, Ext. 3904 • Mississippi PrayerLine 1-800-787-PRAY

"The talking church sounds good. The walking church looks good. The prayerwalking church brings good."

--*Prayerwalking Brochure - IMB*

Ed Bryan, III, is associational missionary for Green River and Overthrust Baptist Associations in Kemmerer, Wyo. Pray for five pastorless churches in Green River and one in Overthrust Association.

Pray that God will raise up Christians to respond to the city's desire to employ 200 American or British English teachers for the high schools in Shenyang, China.

Pray for a new Baptist representative who is completing training and preparing to serve in Germany among an unreached people group. Ask the Lord to begin to open doors in the lives of the non-Christians to whom he will minister.

Pray for a large church in a Last Frontier nation that very recently had some of its facilities destroyed by local authorities. The pastor of the church is in danger of being detained again for his faith in Christ and leadership of the group.

Pray for the new president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, to have wisdom and good health as he seeks to lead his people. Pray that the hundreds of unreached people groups there will have a chance to hear the gospel.

For (1) MS Baptist Partnership Medical/Dental Conference Partnership Missions), (2) Small Church Youth Retreat, Roosevelt State Park, Morton (Equipping Team), (3) Movement to Rhythm Made Easy Easy, Parkway BC, Clinton (Church Music), (4) Special Ministry Retreat, Camp Garawa (Sunday School)

For the Sunday School Leadership Lab for Ministers of Education, Eagle Ridge Conf. Center, Raymond (Sunday School)

Pray for four pastors in Zarma of Niger who are considering beginning six new works. Ask God to grant them wisdom and strength for the task to which He has called them.

Pray for a Baptist representative who will be spending time on a university campus in India this month. If things go well it could really open more doors in the work. Recently India passed the one billion population mark, one sixth of the world's population.

Please pray for Qadaffi, the leader of Libya, that he will have positive experiences with Christian diplomats and other believers. Ask for him to have a heart that is open to the Good News and messengers of the Word.

Zifton Young, Jr. is a volunteer with Mission Service Corps serving as a chaplain in Galveston, Tex. Pray for funds to secure and develop a three-story building to accommodate up to 25 short-term post-operative convalescing heart-transplant and cancer patients.

Thanksgiving Day - The first Thanksgiving Day set aside for the special purpose of prayer as well as celebration, was decreed by Governor Bradford for July 30, 1623. Today, let us truly thank God for His many blessings upon us.

Over 600 people were treated during medical clinics held at Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, in September. Many heard the gospel and over 160 prayed to receive Christ as their Savior. Pray for a change of heart by those city officials who were not positive about this effort.

13

Famous Suits Through the A G E S



what is it?

For over 35 years Baptists in Mississippi have enjoyed sending new suits to the pastors in new work areas. This is our way of letting the Southern Baptist pastors in these areas of Southern Baptist life know that we care about and support them in their work. This year we are assisting pastors in the Nevada and New England Conventions.

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Designate your check: "Suit Project"

**Mississippi Baptists say "Merry Christmas"
to pastors in the Nevada and
New England Conventions.**

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Lorena Church, Smith County, perfect attendance honorees

Lorena Church, Smith County, recently honored its members with perfect attendance in Sunday School. The members honored were (pictured, front row) Stacy Henderson, two years; Helen Faulkner, one year; (back row) Betty Stewart, 10 years; Clifton Arinder, one year; Nicky Henderson, three years; and Tommy Anderson, one year.

Jim Praet is superintendent of Sunday School.

Faith Church, Hickory Flat, ordained two new deacons on Sept. 12. Pictured left is Ellis Perkins, present deacon, presenting Elgin Thompson a certificate of ordination. Also pictured at right is John Bumpas, present deacon, presenting Jerry Cook his certificate. W. G. Dowdy is pastor.



Deacons of Faith Church, Hickory Flat

TULLAHOMA, Tenn. (BP) — **Lynn Porch**, wife of Tennessee Convention Executive Director James Porch, died Oct. 19 at her home in Tullahoma, Tenn., following an extended battle with cancer.

Porch, 57, was the daughter of James L. Sullivan, retired president of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) of the Southern Baptist Convention and the late Velma Sullivan.

A native of Clinton, Porch was a graduate of Mississippi College. She did additional study at New Orleans Seminary and Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro.

Her husband, James, is a former pastor of Northside Church, Clinton.



In addition to her husband and father, survivors include two children, Scott and Terri; a grandchild; a sister, Beth Taylor; and a brother, David Sullivan.

Kermit King, former director of the Discipleship Training and Family Ministry, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, died Oct. 31 in Chattanooga, Tenn. He served as the director from Jan. 1, 1953 to Dec. 31, 1982.

King, a native of McMinnville, Tenn., was a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

A brother-in-law, niece, and nephews survive him.



Easthaven Church, Brookhaven, licensed Kyle Brady to the music ministry. Pictured (from left) are Brady and Bendon Ginn, pastor.

STAFF CHANGES

First Church, Nettleton, has called Jeff Short as minister of music and director of activities. A native of Pontotoc County, Short previously served at First Methodist Church, Booneville. George C. Johnson is pastor.

A native of Brookhaven, White is a graduate of Mississippi College and a senior at New Orleans Seminary. His previous place of service was Calvary Church, Pascagoula.

Noxapater Church, Noxapater, has called Kevin L. White as pastor effective Nov. 1.

First Church, Lauderdale, has called Jerry Bishop (left) as pastor and Tom Harrison (right) as minister of music. This is the second time both of these men have served together at Lauderdale.



Bishop and Harrison

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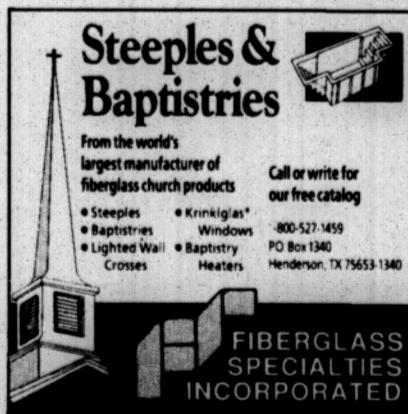
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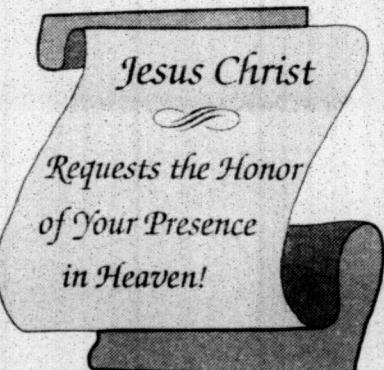
JUST FOR THE RECORD



Mission Friends of First Church Pecan Grove, Ellisville



GAs of First Church Pecan Grove, Ellisville



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!
Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Wesson Church, Wesson, held a ground breaking ceremony, Oct. 24, for the new youth activities building. Pictured (from left) are Earl Stringer, building committee; David Culpepper, youth minister; Eddie Ashley, chairman of deacons; Jeff Knight, building committee; and Scott King, chairman of building committee with the membership of Wesson Church in the background. Mike Carr, pastor, and is not pictured.



Ground breaking at Wesson Church, Wesson

music; Chris Webb, minister of youth and activities; Mary Alice Price, church/pastor secretary; Patsy Simpson, educational secretary; Linda Vanderford, financial secretary; Pauline Moore, organist; Stephanie Pepper, pianist;

Miriam Simpson, pianist; Allen Hatten, church maintenance supervisor; Mary Wynne, child care director; and Melba Meggs, church hostess. The church family hosted a luncheon in their honor following the morning service.

Fasting and Prayer '99 will be held at First Church, Brandon, Nov. 11-13. The times are Thursday, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m.-12 noon. Gene Henderson is pastor. For more information, call (601) 825-6766.

First Church, Kosciusko, observed Staff Appreciation Day on Oct. 24. Robert Autry, a member of the Personnel Committee, recognized the staff on behalf of the congregation during the morning worship service. Serving on the staff are Barry C. Corbett, pastor; Mark Parnell, associate pastor; Faye Wiggers, minister of



GAs of First Church, Coldwater

HOECOMINGS

Horseshoe (Holmes): Nov. 14; Jerold Welch, director of missions, Holmes County Association; guest speaker.

Westside, Bruce: Nov. 14; 10:30 a.m.; lunch served in fellowship hall following morning service; 1:30 p.m. singing featuring Southern Praise of Vardaman; Philip Caples, former pastor, speaker; Tim Ruth, music; Dennis Sullivan, pastor.

Glendale (Alcorn): Nov. 21; 125th year celebration; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; covered dish lunch in Family Life Center; afternoon singing and speaking; James Melton, pastor.

GAs of First Church, Coldwater, recently held a Missions Lock-in. They raised money for the Lottie Moon Mission Offering by having a rock-a-thon. Pat Bein, former missionary to Bangladesh, was the speaker. GA leaders are Leanna Johnson and Nikki Lacefield. Bob Maddux is pastor.

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HALLOWEEN IS EVIL

Editor:

I was shocked to read Carl White's "Who's Afraid of Halloween?" (October 28 issue).

Is a concern that our children are being exposed to wickedness and witchcraft really to be dismissed as

superstition?

When I was in school, the pictures on the wall were of men and women who were to be honored as heroes.

Now I read that it is mere superstition to be concerned about honoring a witch alongside Washington and Lincoln.

Was God merely being superstitious when he said,

"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (Ex. 22:18)," or to "abstain from all appearance of evil (I Thess. 5:22)?"

Perhaps we should dismiss all talk of wickedness in the Bible and have yet another translation: TNSV — The Non-Superstitious Version.

While Satan cannot be everywhere at once, he does

have demons who can represent him.

A possible reason why there are more attacks from Satan on the home and family on Christmas than Halloween is that Satan has no reason to attack those who are worshiping him on his "holy day."

Just because it may not seem as bad to celebrate Halloween as to eat from a casino buffet does not make it any less wrong! We do not say, "Hey! Stealing a car isn't as bad as killing someone! Let's go get us a Mercedes!"

I have not been a pastor for 15 years, but I know the dangers associated with celebrating (the devil) rather than, or even alongside, God! Let's get real!

Brent E. Smith
Hardin, Montana

1999 Gulfshore Summer Staff



Staffers serving at Gulfshore Assembly, Pass Christian were: Row 1 (from left) Bethany Pevey, Skene (UU); Amber Oberst, Petal (MC); Megan Burlison, Wardell, Mo.; Tasha McIntire Bells, Tenn. (JSCC); Susan Irby, Lena (USM); Rosie Christy, Senatobia (MC); Teri Reagan, Summit (SWMCC); Holly Mann, Belmont (NEMCC); Dee Norwood, Pelahatchie (WCC); and Katie Hubbard, Diamondhead (MSU).

Row 2: Krista Feinberg, Pascagoula, (USM); Kelli Haggard, Ellisville (JCJC); Leigh Anne Lubiani, Greenwood (MSU); Anna Cochran, Lucedale (JCJC); Andrew Strehlow, Brookhaven (Co-Lin); Jonathan Harvey, Monticello (Co-Lin); Amber Watson, Fairhope, Ala. (MUW); Tasha Herrington, Ellisville (USM); Amanda Williams, Sardis (NWMCC); Julie Partain, Pearl (DSU); Misty Moore, Coldwater (DSU); Jenny Reed, Louisville (MUW); and Keri Norwood, Hazlehurst (Co-Lin).

Row 3: Jon Caranna, Gulfport (MC); Sam Taylor, Magee (MC); Grant Douglas, Brookhaven (Co-Lin); Joy Pickering, Seminary (WCC); Jodi Miles, Laurel (JCJC); Jeri Ann Burlison, Wardell, Mo.; Kristy Onsby, Memphis, Tenn. (UU); Mary Ann England, Sallis (MUW); Natalie Williams, Gulfport (MSU); and Kimberly Kelly, Gulfport (MGCC).

Row 4: John Martin, Silver Creek (WCC); Erin Harvey, Kosciusko (USM); Chris Whitaker, Eupora (MSU); Jessica Dale, Gulfport (MGCC); Richard Bryant, Beaumont (WCC); Brooke Joynes, Collinsville (MCC); Britton Lewis, Meadville (Co-Lin); Jenny Norwood, Hazlehurst (WCC); and Jerome Taylor, New Albany (NEMCC).

Row 5: Caleb Smith, Collinsville (MCC); Shane Mason, Monticello (Co-Lin); Othen Pipkins, Beaumont (WCC); Shannon Daughtry, Columbia (WCC); and Frank Simmons, Long Beach (Gulfshore manager).

Not pictured: Wesley Anderson, Laurel (JCJC); Beth Atkins, Tupelo (NEMCC); Trish Buffington, Florence (Belhaven); Rodney Carver, Gulfport (USM); Kelly Dunn, Hattiesburg (DSU); Jana and Brad Johns, Magee (houseparents); Heather Johnson, Meridian, (MCC); Laura Love, Glen Allen (MUW); and Ben Skipper, Shuqualak (MSU).

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REVIVAL DATES

Silver Springs, Oskyka: Nov. 14-17; Sunday, 11 a.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Lonnie Case, evangelist; Scott Bourne, music.

East Louisville, Louisville: Nov. 14-17; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Max Jones, evangelist; Tommy Jones, interim pastor.

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Trace Ridge, Ridgeland: Nov. 20-23; Sat., Mon., and Tues., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; A. M. "Sonny" Moore, Atlanta, Ga., speaker; Lew King, Clinton, music; Ed McDaniel, pastor.

Woodville Heights, Jackson: Nov. 14-17; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Larry McFadden Ministries, Inc., Orlando, Fla., evangelist and music; Wayne Kimbrough, pastor.

Lollars Grove (Webster): Nov. 14-17; Sunday, 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; fellowship meal following each service; Melvin Mordecai, Meadowview Church, Starkville, evangelist; The Praise team from Meadowview Church, music; Harvie Jackson, pastor.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Honduran pastor Meza to speak Nov. 12

By Tim Nicholas, director
Office of Communication

A Partnership Missions Celebration featuring a minister to the street gangs of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, is set for Nov. 12-13 at First Church, Jackson, and at the Baptist Building at 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson.

The celebration banquet begins Nov. 12 at 6:30 p.m. in First Church's Fellowship Hall West. The following morning's sessions are at the Baptist Building.

The event, sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), will feature reports of missions volunteers and describe opportunities for future service.

Armando Meza of Tegucigalpa will speak during the Friday evening banquet.

Meza, a Baptist pastor, has in the past two years developed a ministry to teenagers that has turned many from criminal activity to sports. His ministry has 76 soccer teams, 20 basketball teams, and 12 volleyball teams.

More than 2,600 teens have professed Jesus Christ as Savior since the ministry began.

Also speaking during the banquet will be Jim Futral, executive director, MBCB.

His topic will be "Being on Mission."

After a continental breakfast at 7:45 a.m. on Nov. 13, sessions include a discussion of medical/dental missions and break out sessions on the three partnership areas of Ukraine, Honduras, and Maryland/Delaware.

Mississippi Baptists have sent 1,174 individuals into these missions partnership areas between January-November 1999. Total financial expenditures for 1999 are \$1.5 million.

The purpose of the partnerships includes sharing expertise, manpower, prayer, and financial support for church growth in these three areas.

In Ukraine,



Armando Meza, pastor of Cerro Grande Baptist Church in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, is the developer of a city-wide ministry to street gangs. Meza will be a featured speaker during the Partnership Missions Celebration, Nov. 12-13, in Jackson. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

Mississippi Baptists are aiding in developing new churches in the Odessa region. Before the communist regime, that area was the cradle of Baptist work. Most churches were closed or destroyed under communism.

"This event is targeted toward those who have been involved in partnership projects in 1999, and is also open to anyone interested in a partnership mission project," said Paul Harrell, director of the Partnership Mission Department.

Banquet tickets are \$10. Reservations may be obtained by calling toll free (800) 748-1651, or in Jackson at (601) 292-3398.

Jackie Carroll Hamilton dies

Memorial services for Jackie Carroll Hamilton were held Oct. 30 at Highland Church, Meridian.

Hamilton, 67, died Oct. 27, at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg. He was born in Philadelphia in 1932. He moved with his family to Hattiesburg when he was a young child.

Hamilton served four years in the U.S. Navy as a radioman. It was while stationed in Alaska that he felt a call to the ministry.

Upon returning to Hattiesburg, Hamilton graduated from William Carey College in three years with a Bachelor of Arts degree in religion and philosophy. He also graduated from New Orleans Seminary. His early pastorates included three Jones County churches: County Line, Wildwood, and Glade. His later pastorates included Terry; Riverside, New Orleans; First, Quitman; and Highland, Meridian, where he served for 15 years. He retired in 1994 from First Church, West Point, where he served over seven years.

He is survived by his wife Barbara Loustalot Hamilton; two daughters, Jacquelyn Carole Linton and Lisa Anne Mansilla, both of Louisville, Ky.; a son, Jonathan Carroll Hamilton of New York City; two sisters, Martha Hamilton Allman of Hattiesburg and Mary Hamilton Daniel of Pasadena, Texas; and seven grandchildren.



Hamilton

WMU to trim 39 jobs from Birmingham office

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) has formalized the first of several cooperative efforts with outside vendors that will result in the elimination of 39 positions at the organization's national headquarters in Birmingham, Ala. WMU currently has a staff of 150.

The initial finalized cooperative effort is with Media Services Inc. of Birmingham and will provide the technical and personnel support for meeting customer service requests for the national organization.

Other cooperative efforts are in negotiation to outsource internal operations that are technology based, such as information technology, and optional employee services, such as travel and food services. The new system of operation is scheduled to be in place March 31, 2000.

"The challenge of staying current in technology has been consuming more and more of our fiscal budget for several years," said Wanda Lee, national WMU president. "In an effort to stabilize these expenses, the WMU executive board previously discussed and affirmed the possibility of contracting with outside vendors to assume these responsibilities.

"The goal of the board was to free up more of WMU's revenue to support the central purpose of WMU, which is to provide the best possible missions-education resources for churches," she said, adding that the largest portion of WMU's revenue comes from the sale of its magazines and products. National WMU does not receive any allocation from

the Cooperative Program or the two Southern Baptist annual missions offerings, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

"While this is a reasonable decision from a business standpoint, it is a heart-wrenching situation from a personal angle," said Lee, who has assumed more leadership of the national headquarters

during the interim period following the recent retirement of WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien. "All of the employees at national WMU are loyal, dedicated workers. They see their jobs as a ministry and thereby are not just working, but fulfilling a spiritual commitment.

"I grieve over every position that we are having to cut in this process," Lee contin-

ued. "My prayer for each of these employees is that God will give them peace, and a quick and clear direction for their lives. I love each of them and appreciate their service to WMU, many of whom have given decades of their lives to the organization."

Lee said that each employee is being given a generous severance package and out-placement assistance.



LifeAnswers

Ron Murphree, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

I know a Christian girl who makes top grades, but when she fell in love she started treating her parents with disrespect. What is your advice?

The girl is struggling with something, and she is taking it out on her parents. She may be trying to figure out what is going on in her life and is pushing the limits with the people who most love her. Her parents need to understand that this new relationship is very special to her. She may also be feeling some guilt, and rather than dealing with the guilt she may be projecting her hurt on those who are closest to her. If you are a close friend to the girl, you have earned the right to confront her with your concern. There may be another side to this issue. The parents may be demanding too much from this girl, and she may be

attempting to break away. Let her talk about what is happening and be a good listener. Try not to take sides, and be supportive. Use "I" statements about what you are seeing and avoid lecturing. Be sure to pray for her and her parents.

Our seven-year-old son is very appreciative of gifts, but his nine-year-old sister seems to feel that the things we do for her are never enough. How can we promote a thankful heart in our daughter?

This is normal sibling rivalry. The oldest was "dethroned" when the seven-year-old came along. She forgets what you have done for her and may even feel entitled to more because she is the oldest. This is the "sin nature" caught in its prime! You may not be speaking a language

that your daughter understands. The Five Love Languages of Children, by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell, is a good resource. Your son's appreciation may not be for the gifts themselves but for the acts of service or the quality time involved, whereas your daughter may see gifts from a different viewpoint. The beauty of parenting is that we get the opportunity to experiment with all sorts of ideas. We must keep trying until we hit on the right course of action (and then that may only last a little while before things change again). That must be how the Lord at times feels about us. Get the Chapman/Campbell book and become a student of your children, then listen to your daughter's words and discern what kind of language you hear her speaking.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Renewed blessings

Numbers 22:1-25:18

By Sylvia Fleming

Word had spread and fear was running rampant. Balak, king of Moab, knew of the people who had come up out of Egypt. Even though it had been more than 40 years since the Israelites left Egypt, Balak apparently remembered that account or perhaps he was thinking of the Israelites' recent victories.

Whatever his thoughts were, Balak did not look upon the nation of Israel as a disorganized bunch of nomads. Even though the Israelites had bypassed his country as they were heading to Canaan, he knew of the devastation they had brought upon the Amorites.

After defeating the Amorites, the Israelites then made camp near Moab. Because of Balak's fear, he assumed his would be the next country attacked. He needed help.

Out of fear and desperation Balak sent for Balaam, a soothsayer — an expert in the field of fortune telling. Balak related the fact that those people had come out from Egypt, covering the face of the earth and were living next to him. Consequently, out of fear, Balak attempted to hire Balaam to curse the Israelites.

There has been much speculation about Balaam and his work, who he really was and who his god really was. Was he God's former prophet? Was he



Fleming

truly a soothsayer? If so, why would God be using him? It must be remembered that the practice of his livelihood was absolutely forbidden by God; consequently, he could not have been a godly man.

Or could he? How universal the thought is that no matter what a person does through the week, he can continue to call himself a Christian on Sunday or think of himself as a Christian at all times. Because God is a God of mercy, people often forget his holiness and perfection and the fact that he will not look upon sin. He is a God of judgment, as well as mercy, and he expects obedience.

However, it must also be remembered that the LORD is God, the covenant God of Israel, and can use anyone at anytime and at any place for any reason he chooses. At that particular time, God chose to

use Balaam to bring about the providential will of God. God always takes what is meant for evil and turns it to good when pertaining to his children (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28), oftentimes using ungodly people to do so. Also it must be remembered that Micah reminded the Israelites that they were not to forget Balaam (Micah 6:5). However godly or ungodly he was, he was important and is to be remembered.

When Balaam came to Balak, instead of cursing the nation of Israel, Balaam blessed them, prophesying of the marvelous greatness of the people of Israel.

Repeatedly, Balaam blessed the Israelites. Balak was absolutely irate over the blessings Balaam had placed upon his enemy. Consequently, Balak refused to pay the prophet/soothsayer. His response, however, to receiving no pay was that no matter how much

money was offered to him, he would not go against the Lord.

Thus, everything Balak had planned backfired, coming to nothing. He had called Balaam to bring a curse upon them, and instead Balaam had blessed them three times.

Before Balaam left to return home, he did tell Balak what the nation of Israel would eventually do to the Moabites:

"I shall see him, not now [but in the future]: I shall behold, but not near: there shall come a Star [a royal person-the Messiah] out of Jacob and a Scepter [the future kingdom of God on earth] shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth" (Num. 24:17).

Though yet future, it is certain that one day Jesus, that Star, will hold the Scepter as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Fleming is a member of Bond Church, Neshoba Association.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Continuing with conviction

Joshua 3:7-17

By Jerry L. Smith

Some years ago, I served a congregation that consisted mostly of white-collar professionals. I got a call one day from a young engineer seeking my counsel on whether to accept a promotion with his company that required relocating to another state. The new job promised a higher salary, greater fringe benefits, and the opportunity to move up on the company.

After listening to his tangible reasons for accepting the offer, I asked if he had considered the intangible effects of his move. Would his new position require additional responsibilities that would take him away from his family? Could his spiritual life adjust to the greater demands on

his time? I reminded him that many a ladder climber had reached the top rung and realized that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

In our lesson this week, God is "promoting" Israel. In a move that required obedience, he called them to move forward under his direction.

Are you willing to risk following God's purpose for your life? If so, obedience is the key that unlocks the door of God's favor and blessing. Notice how the Israelites stepped out on faith, and how God blessed their obedience.

Divine purpose (3:7-8). A popular evangelistic tract states that "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life."



Smith

Can that really be true? Does he truly have a "plan" for my life? I think he does.

A traveling passer-by asked a resident of a small town, "Were any great men born in this town?" In a folksy drawl, the resident responded, "Nope, only babies."

God made Joshua great because he had a plan for his life, but Joshua had to trust in that plan. Are you following God's plan for your life? Or are you just checking off the completed stops on your own agenda?

Divine promise (3:9-13). There is a sign on a narrow road starting an ascent in the Rocky Mountain National Park that reads, "Never overestimate the width of this road."

With the parting of the Jordan, God assured the Israelites that they could never

overestimate his presence or his power. The duplicity of the Red Sea experience reminded them of his constant watch care.

As a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, Calvin says, "You could step in the road tomorrow and get hit by a cement truck. That's why my motto is 'Live for the moment!' What's your motto?" Hobbes answers, "Look down the road."

We need to be forward-looking people, but sometimes God calls us to look back. God builds upon each of our experiences with him. As we learn to trust him in each situation, he builds upon that trust to lead us to a deeper spirituality and a higher plane of maturity.

Because I love administration, order, and structure, I am comforted in knowing that God is intentionally linear in dealing with his people. We move from point A to point B by being obedient to the revelation that is afforded us, and by learning

from the experiences presented to us.

What miracles has God performed in the past that should give you faith for your future?

Divine progress (3:14-17). With the recollection of the Red Sea experience, the nation of Israel followed Joshua's instructions and stepped off into the Jordan River. By being obedient to God's leadership, they witnessed another miracle at the hands of God. The waters stood up in a heap and they crossed over dry ground.

It requires faith to take God at his word. Is your life at his disposal? Are you going in his direction? Remember that the door of blessing is unlocked with the key of obedience. Take a minute to reflect upon your progress, and be willing to make the necessary adjustments to assure that your life is going in the proper direction.

Smith is pastor of First Church, Summit.

LIFE AND WORK

Turning to God

Jonah 1:17-2:10

By Tom Atwood

In our own ways, we all have run from God and his purpose for us. How can we know that God will still use us? The message of Jonah is a message of hope and assurance that comes from turning back to our God and his will for our lives. We often make excuses for our failure but they are not accepted nor do his demands change.

God's purpose prevails (1:17; 2:10). Jonah had tried, in vain, to run away from God. How easy it is to ignore one of God's most obvious attributes — his sovereignty. God is in control. There are no surprises in heaven because he rules over people and nature.



Atwood

When the sailors tossed Jonah overboard, God "provided" a great fish to swallow the prophet. For three days and three nights Jonah slept on a foam blubber mattress! Then, at God's command he was spit out on dry land.

Another lesson that is corollary to God's sovereignty should be learned in Jonah's experience. God is able and willing to use any means to accomplish his purpose and, in the final analysis, believers must know that they cannot run away from God.

This entire scenario is obviously futile if not foolish. To run from God and his purpose

is to reject some of God's riches blessings. To choose our way over God's way is a foolish choice.

God's mercy runs deep (2:1-7). Praying, whatever the posture and wherever the place, was the only appropriate response to God's miraculous intervention in Jonah's life. He cried out to his God from deep within the great fish. No doubt, in Jonah's mind, he was surely dead and buried in a watery grave as he confessed, "From the depths of the grave I called for help (v. 2)!"

In God's mercy he heard Jonah's prayer. He always hears and answers the repentant heart. Jonah's determination to run his own life in defiance of God's call was washed away as the sea currents swirled about him and the waves and breakers swept over

him (v.3). In God's wisdom and power, he sends just the right circumstances to produce a willing and submissive spirit in his children. As with Jonah, crisis contributes to contrition.

A change of attitude is never easy but where God changes the heart the difference is obvious. God's deliverance of Jonah filled him with gratitude replacing where there had been resentment and rebellion. His circumstances could have been no worse. He acknowledged, "To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath me in forever, but you brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God (v.6)."

No one ever moves beyond the mercy of God and no one ever runs so far that God's grace cannot reach him. "There is a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea." It is vast and deep! It is never too late nor are circumstances so dark that God can-

not respond to the needy heart's cry for mercy.

God's grace inspires (2:8-9). Jonah confessed that there is only one true God and one true source of salvation: "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs (v.8)."

Because of God's grace, Jonah poured out a "song of thanksgiving" (v.9a). Gratitude is the godly response to God's grace. Phil. 4:6 tells us to approach God "in everything... with thanksgiving." 1 Thess. 5:18 exhorts us to "give thanks in all circumstances."

With a grateful heart, Jonah gave God the worship of which he is worthy and the service that he requires. Jonah made a life commitment to following God: "What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord" (v. 9).

Atwood is pastor of First Church, Oxford.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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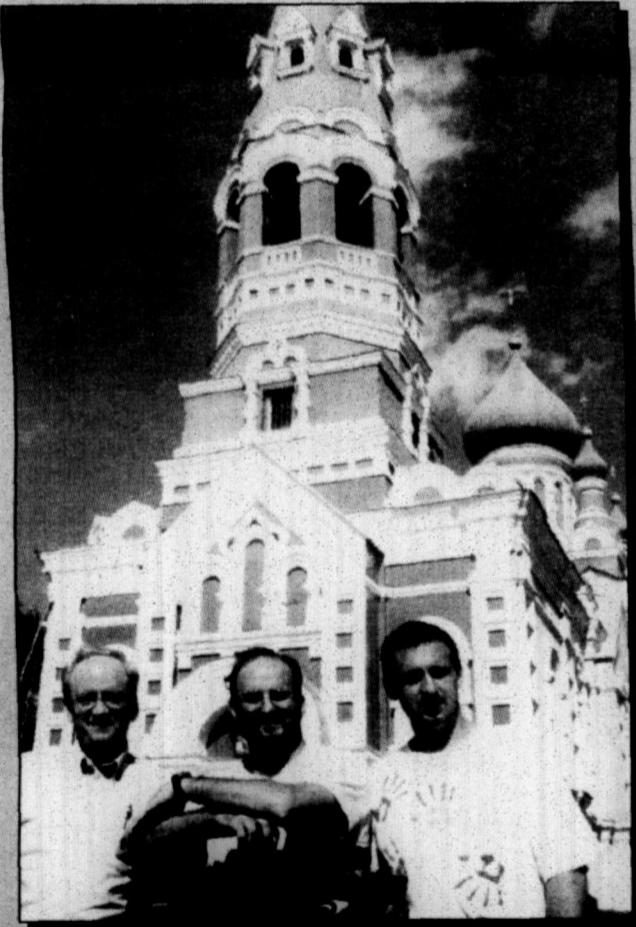
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OUUK IWVRCWA CK RNU
AWJ.

TWAWENC RJD: KCKU

Clue: N = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Zechariah Fourteen: One.

Vessels on location



Visiting a Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Balta, Ukraine are (from left) Gene Gillis, pastor of Cleary Church, Rankin County; Don Warren, Jackson, videographer; and Slava Gerasimchuk, translator for the team as they shot video for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) "Vessels" video magazine. Mississippi Baptists are currently conducting a partnership with Ukrainian Baptists. For more information on the latest issue of "Vessels," contact the MBCB Broadcast Services Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 292-3398 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

N.M. governor's drug proposal criticized

SANTA FE, N.M. (BP) — A Southern Baptist anti-drug crusader says New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson's views that drugs should be legalized is "pie in the sky" and "not based on reason."

Ted Stone, a Durham, N.C., minister and former drug addict, met with Johnson Nov. 1 to discuss the governor's views, which lately have drawn national attention and considerable criticism from fellow public officials.

Johnson, 46, a Republican and the highest-ranking elected official to advocate drug legalization, has said he will use his position to advance the issue nationally, but has no plans to implement such policies in his home state.

The second-term governor is a triathlete who abstains from drugs, alcohol, and junk food, but has admitted using drugs in his youth.

Johnson had concealed his views until June, when it leaked to the press that he planned to begin a campaign in the fall advocating drug legalization,

Johnson's press secretary, Diane Kinderwater, told Baptist Press.

His views stirred controversy last month after Johnson tried to make his case for drug legalization in a speech at The Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank.

"By legalizing drugs we could reduce the amount of drug abuse we have in this country," Johnson was quoted as saying in an Oct. 19 Chicago Tribune article. "Law enforcement would be able to enforce laws we want them to but can't because half their focus is on drugs."

Stone said Johnson is a "victim of a kind of creeping frustration" that the drug war seems hopeless. "It's very easy to hoist the white flag of surrender unless you have the hope that it can be solved — and (Christians) have that hope."

During a 15-minute meeting in the governor's office, Stone and his ministry partner Philip Barber told Johnson his plan would increase addiction, human suffering, and govern-

ment social spending.

Stone said Johnson responded that the benefits of drug legalization would outweigh the costs. The Tribune story reported Johnson and other drug legalization advocates believe state and local governments could benefit fiscally by regulating, distributing, and taxing the drugs.

"You control and tax drugs and that is going to reduce drug abuse," Kinderwater said. "It's common sense. You tax the drugs and you use that money to educate and treat people."

Kinderwater said Johnson has repeatedly stressed that drugs are a "bad choice."

Johnson told The Cato Institute: "We need to make drugs a controlled substance just like alcohol. Perhaps we ought to let the government regulate it, let the government grow it, let the government manufacture it, distribute it, market it. And if that doesn't lead to decreased drug use, I

don't know what would."

"I just think his proposal is pie in the sky," Stone remarked. "I don't think it's based on reason."

Johnson and Stone met once before, in 1996, during Stone's first of two cross-country walks to spread his gospel-based, anti-drug message. Stone said he believes that meeting helped spark a measure that outlawed driving in windows at New Mexico liquor stores.

Though Stone said the governor then disagreed with him that the drive-ins should be outlawed, Johnson later signed the measure.

"It showed me that for whatever reason he was capable of changing his mind on an issue, so there is hope."

Johnson has signed a card pledging to abstain from alcohol and illicit drugs — the same pledge card messengers were urged to sign at the 1999 Southern Baptist Convention, Stone said.

Intelligent design seen as key in evolution debate

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — As several state school systems wrangle over what to teach about the origin of life, a group of creationists say defining the terms of the debate scientifically not biblically is paramount for debunking the theory of evolution.

Two months after the Kansas State Board of Education voted in August to eliminate references to the theory of evolution and the "Big Bang" theory on state assessment tests, state school officials in New Mexico and Kentucky joined the creation-evolution controversy by rewriting their curricula guidelines in an effort to ward off a similar fate for the belief that humans evolved from apes.

New Mexico's Board of Education voted 14-1 on Oct. 8 against requiring teachers to present alternative theories to the teaching of Darwinian evolution.

Just days before the New Mexico vote, the Kentucky Education Department replaced the word "evolution" with the phrase "changing over time" in its curricula guidelines for middle school and high school science courses.

Meanwhile, the Kansas State Board of Education is faced with rewriting its state testing standards after three national science groups refused to let the board use their copyrighted materials following the board's

elimination of references to macroevolution — the process of change from one species to another — as well as the theory that the universe originated in a colossal explosion of matter and radiation about 15 billion years ago known as the Big Bang.

As school systems across the country re-evaluate their policies to avert controversy, Hal Ostrander, associate dean and professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary's James P. Boyce College of the Bible, Louisville, Ky., says creationists should put aside their differences about the earth's age and unite around the theory of intelligent design, a "scientific tool with which to take apart naturalism as a worldview and its concomitant evolutionary theories."

Intelligent design, which takes no position on the earth's age, is the theory that earth, life, and humanity owe their existence to a purposeful, intelligent creator. Philip Johnson, a law professor at the University of California at Berkeley, credited as the father of this anti-evolution argument, has been working for several years to change the focus of the debate from science versus biblical creationism by challenging the reigning evolutionary paradigm on philosophical and scientific grounds.

Darwinism, or evolution, the theory first proposed by 19th-century scientist Charles Darwin, meanwhile holds that all diverse and complex organisms exist as a result of undirected mechanistic processes, primarily through random mutations and natural selection. Darwinian evolutionists argue for a 4.5-billion-year-old earth and a 15-billion-year-old universe.

Evolutionists in the scientific community and the media, Ostrander charged, have attempted to stereotype all biblical creationists as advocating a young earth which could not be more than 10,000 years old — a characterization which he said is quickly discredited by the scientific community as a debate over faith versus science.

For intelligent design theory to defeat and eradicate evolutionary theories strictly at the scientific level is what we actually need to be pursuing," Ostrander said, as opposed to attempting to defeat the opposition by advancing various creation theories.

"Evolutionary theory can be debunked at the scientific level alone by way of operating within the sphere of God's general revelation alone. Intelligent design theory is presently engaged in this kind of work and is seemingly beginning to win the day against its evolutionary opponents."

John Wiester, chairman of the American Scientific Affiliation's science education commission, said the word "evolution" is ambiguous and can "vary from simple change to the contention that human beings are the result of a random and undirected process that works without either plan or purpose."

"The power to define the terms of the debate is the power to win," said Wiester, whose organization of 2,500 evangelical Christian scientists from around the country as well as Canada and Great Britain advocates the teaching of evolution as science — not ideology — by distinguishing between "the multiple meanings of evolution" and acknowledging "unanswered questions and unresolved problems" about evolution theory.

The recent state school board decision in New Mexico endorsing the teaching of evolution exclusively, Wiester said, will allow "this ideology masquerading as science" to go unchallenged.

"In New Mexico, the Darwinists now have a monopoly to teach their story without students hearing evidence that is non-supportive or even contrary to the Darwinian fundamental premise that there is no direction, plan or purpose to the process," Wiester said.

Marshall Berman, the board member who led a three-year campaign to change the New Mexico policy, told The New York Times, "This gives teachers the political cover they need to teach evolution."

Education officials in Kentucky have since tried to downplay their move by stating that the change is being reviewed by the Kentucky Board of Education.

"This is a semantics issue, not a subject or curriculum issue," Lisa Gross, spokeswoman for the state education department, said, according to a Reuters news service report. Gross said decisions on curricula components are left to the local school districts.